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ABSTRACT

Student absenteeism has become a major concern of educators, parents, and communities. Accordingly, this paper presents a series of annotations of articles addressing three aspects of this problem: (1) explanations of student absenteeism, including descriptions of the habitual offender, along with school, peer, and community influences; (2) problems faced by both the student and the community; and (3) possible solutions to these problems. The latter are grouped under the following subheadings: parental and community involvement, student accountability, behavior modification, and setting a limit (denial of course credit). Included as a word of caution is an article focusing on court litigation arising from academic penalties for absences. A thematic summary of the annotated articles follows, and then general conclusions are drawn from them. The investigation closes with five recommendations: (1) that schools assess the needs of students and of educators and administrators within each school environment before instituting a program to reduce absenteeism; (2) that a cross-section of school personnel, students, and community be involved in developing a program to reduce absenteeism; (3) that students direct and develop programs in schools where peer pressure is a major influence; (4) that policies be specifically directed toward habitually absent students; and (5) that programs and policies be evaluated frequently. A bibliography is included. (TE)

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STUDENT ABSENTEEISM: EXPLANATIONS, PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

by

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by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the course S591--Exit Project
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INTRODUCTION

> "Absenteeism is always a problem but in recent years it has grown to the point that it was reported as the most perplexing student problem. . ." (Fernandez and Cardenas, 1976).

Student absenteeism had become a major concern of educators, administrators, parents, and communities. Often efforts to control increasing absenteeism and to reduce the rates presently in existence had proven ineffective. (Levanto, 1975) The traditional method of assuring attendance had become obsolete. (Hoback, 1976) Educators and administrators realized students' needs were not being met and these students were looking outside the educational system to fulfill their requirements. (Birman and Natriello, 1978)

In 1979, for the first time in the eleven-year history of the Gallup Poll, "pupil lack of interest/truancy" was ranked in the list of the biggest problems the general public thought the public schools had to handle. It since had remained in the ranking. The interpretation indicated the public was aware of the increasing problem and wanted changes made. (Gallup, 1979)

"Countless hours are (being) spent enforcing . . . attendance policies and dealing with the problems associated with irregular attendance." (Brimm, Forgety, and Sadler, 1978) For this reason, educators and administrators found it necessary to develop special programs and procedures to control the increase in absenteeism. The programs met with some success, yet what was successful in one environment was not always successful in a different

environment. Educators, administrators, parents and communities found there were no set patterns. (Rogers, 1980)

Absenteeism has been a problem, but through the development of a description of the habitually absent student, the discussions of the effects absenteeism had upon the student and the community, and an overview of the solution programs tried in schools, this paper will attempt to offer a better understanding of the problem and possibly offer some ideas toward its elimination.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Student absenteeism was a major concern of educators, parents, and communities. In the past several years, absenteeism had been steadily increasing until it had been described as ". . . the most perplexing student problem. . ." (Fernandez and Cardenas, 1976). Further intensifying the growing concern was the relationship which had been noted between the decline in student achievement and the increase in absenteeism. The schools, therefore, were confronted with the challenge of developing programs which best arrested the increase in student absenteeism.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The first purpose of the study was to develop a general description of the student who was habitually absent or truant and to note the influence which supported their decision toward absenteeism. The second purpose

was to assess the effects absenteeism had upon student achievement and, to a lesser extent, on the community well-being. The third purpose was to explore the various solutions and programs offered by the school to combat increasing absenteeism.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

As this study was undertaken, three important aspects of student absenteeism were addressed: 1) Explanations of student absenteeism, 2) Problems faced by both the student and the community, and 3) Possible solutions. As the investigation continued, a further breakdown of these three aspects was necessary for continuity. These aspects and the further breakdowns have been organized in the annotations included in this report.

The first set of annotations, entitled Explanations, were collected to offer a general description of the student who was habitually absent or truant and to offer an explanation of the various influences affecting the decision of attendance versus absenteeism. The second set of annotations, labeled Problems, were included to demonstrate the effects absenteeism had on student achievement and the community problems which developed with increased absenteeism. The final set of annotations were compiled to offer a large number of possible solutions to a problem which had confronted many schools. An article which dealt with law cases was annotated. This word of caution was included to warn administrators, parents, and teachers, who want to set up absenteeism reduction programs for their schools, of some of the problems which could be encountered.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The array of material discussing absenteeism quickly advanced this study. It should be noted, however, the majority of the material concentrated on solutions and this was reflected in the study. The time limitations set forth restricted an investigation of all relevant material. Although further investigation would enhance the information presented in this paper, it is believed the final conclusions and recommendations would remain constant.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Absence - "the failure of a pupil to be present at school; generally understood as failure to be present at more than half the session." (Good 1973: 2)

Absentee - ". . . one that is absent or absents himself. . . ." (Gove 1961: 6)

Absenteeism - ". . . continual interruption of attendance." (Gove, 1961: 6)

Achievement - "accomplishment or proficiency of performance in a given skill or body of knowledge; 2) progress in school. . . ." (Good 1973: 7)

Achievement Age - "the age equivalent of an individual's achievement in all subjects as shown on a standardized achievement test." (Good 1973: 19)

Alienation - "(sociol.) a feeling of being removed from or out of sympathy with the prevalent goals, trends, or mores of . . . one's . . . group. . . ." (Good 1973: 25)

Attendance - "the act of being present, particularly at school." (Good 1973: 47)

Attendance Rates - ". . . expressed as a percentage of those enrolled. . . ." (Wright 1976: 358)

Buddy System - students assigned in pairs ". . . who lived close . . . (or) who had a telephone to call . . ." in an attempt to monitor each other's attendance. (Reynolds 1977: 306)

College-preparatory Program (Curriculum, College-preparatory) - ". . . a body of educative activities and experiences (in secondary education) prescribed for pupils who wish to enroll at institutions of higher learning." (Good 1973: 158)

Compulsory Attendance Laws (Compulsory Education) - "the practice, now common to all states, territories, and possessions of the United States, of requiring school attendance by law. . . ." (Good 1973: 123)

(Compulsory School Attendance) - "the requirement established by the state legislature that all children, with certain specified exceptions, must attend school; the lower age limits vary from six to eight years, the upper age limits from sixteen to eighteen years in various states." (Good 1973: 48)

Credit - ". . . official certification of the completion of a course of study. . . ." (Good 1973: 153)

Cross-age Tutoring - "the process by which academic instruction is provided to a younger student by an older one. . . ." (Maher 1982: 360)

Electives - "any of a number of studies from which the student is allowed to select." (Good, 1973: 208)

Excused Absence - "absence from school for any reason recognized as legitimate by the school. . . ." (Good 1973: 3)

Extracurricular Activities - "that area of the total curriculum which includes experiences not usually provided in typical classes. . . ." (Good 1973: 9)

Grade Point Average - "a measure of average scholastic success in all school subjects during a certain term or semester . . . obtained by dividing grade points by hours of course work taken. . . ." (Good 1973: 53)

High School - "the school division following the elementary school, comprising most often grades 9 to 12 or grades 7 to 12. . . ." (Good 1973: 281)

Junior High School - "usually, a school that enrolls pupils in grades 7, 8 and 9. . . ." (Good 1973: 322)

Learner - See Student. (Good 1973: 322)

Phase Electives - "electives offered in time sequences of less than a full year." (Wright 1976: 358)

Pupil - "one who attends a kindergarten or a school of elementary level; one who attends a school of secondary level (in this sense, pupil often is replaced by student. . . ." (Good 1973: 461)

School Phobia - "a generalized irrational anxiety expressed in deterioration of self control when in school or forced to attend school." (Good 1973: 584)

Secondary School - See High School. (Good 1973: 523)

Senior High School - "the upper part of a . . . secondary school, comprising usually grades 10 to 12 or 9 to 12." (Good 1973: 527)

Student - "one who attends an educational institution. . . ." (Good 1973: 561)

Suspension - "the temporary, forced withdrawal of a pupil from school. . . ." (Good 1973: 577)

Tardiness - "the act or state of being late. . . ." (Good 1973: 584)

Truancy - "deliberate absence from school on the part of the pupil without knowledge or consent of the parent; 2) absence of a pupil from school for which no reasonable or acceptable excuse is given. . . ." (Good 1973: 625)

Truant - "a youth who is absent from school without the knowledge or consent of his parents . . . a youth who is absent from school without a valid excuse." (Good 1973: 625)

Unexcused Absence - "absence from school for reasons that are not recognized by the school as legitimate. . . ." (Good 1973: 3)

STUDENT ABSENTEEISM: AN OVERVIEW

Rogers, Don C. "Stepping Up School Attendance." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 64 (December, 1980): 122-124.

Rogers stated, on an average day approximately eight percent of the student population was absent. Some urban schools even reached levels of 30 percent. Five senior high school principals in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system formed the Dansforth Foundation to study what was being done to improve attendance. Five categories were determined: 1) rewards for good attendance, 2) punishment for excessive absenteeism, 3) home/school contracts, 4) contact with community agencies and 5) alternative programs (122). In the analysis of the school system, the Foundation found a high correlation between days attended and grades earned. They also found black students' absenteeism rates were slightly higher than whites, although their rates steadily decreased during the Sophomore to Senior years. Students also attended more non-required, than required, courses. Several recommendations resulted, including establishing a buddy system, maintaining contact with parents, and sponsoring contests. After adopting some of the recommendations, all high schools in the system noted a two to five percent increase in attendance in 1978.

EXPLANATIONS: DESCRIPTION OF THE HABITUAL OFFENDER

Brimm, Jack L., John Forgety, and Kenneth Sadler. "Student Absenteeism: A Survey Report." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 62 (February, 1978): 65-69.

A questionnaire of 36 statements was sent to all Tennessee secondary school principals. Of the 83 percent of the questionnaires returned, 86 percent of the principals responded indicating absenteeism was a major problem, yet only 50 percent stated their absenteeism rate was increasing. The principals noted changes in the compulsory attendance laws, student attitudes toward authority and school, and the erosion of parental control all led to the increase. The principals stated male students, juniors and seniors and older and less popular students were more likely to be absent. Students with higher grades and those involved in extracurricular activities were less likely to be absent. The principals found no relationship between absenteeism and race.

What about age 18- adults?

Levanto, Joseph. "High School Absenteeism." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 59 (October, 1975): 100-104.

Levanto conducted a study at a large Connecticut high school relating to the identification and analysis of absenteeism. A summary of his findings indicated 1) distinguishable patterns of absenteeism were displayed, 2) boys generally had lower rates during the first three years of high school (girls were found to be the exact opposite), 3) absenteeism increased with each succeeding class and age group, 4) lower rates were noted when the student lived with both parents. Relating achievements with absenteeism rates, students in college preparatory programs had the lowest rate, followed by business education and then general education. Absenteeism generally was lowest for students with the highest IQ scores and those students with the highest class ranks. Students who participated in non-academic activities also had lower rates. Levanto noted black students had a higher absenteeism rate while students of the Jewish faith (followed by Catholics) had the lowest rate. The poorer the student's personality rating by teachers, the higher the absenteeism rate.

Cause of absent?

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Platt, A. W. "Intrinsic Causes for Public School Absences." School and Society 57 (March 13, 1943): 307-308.

Platt found a positive relationship between the number of friends a pupil thought he or she had and school attendance. However, he noted when a pupil reached a certain point, the relationship became negative and more friends lessened attendance. Platt drew no conclusions from the research.

Reid, K. C. "Alienation and Persistent School Absenteeism." Research in Education 26 (November, 1981): 31-40.

Reid compiled an extensive list of contributory institutional variables (32) which could influence a student's behavior and scholastic progress. Attendance was one of these variables. Persistent absentees and two control groups were studied to determine the relationship between alienation and persistent absenteeism. The study indicated significantly fewer absentees were able to make sense out of the events which took place in school and did not feel a part of the school community. They did not feel helpless or confused, however, which Reid attributed to their decision to withdraw from the school. The size of the school did not seem to be a factor, although the absentees felt they had a very small chance of protecting their interests when the conflicts occurred between them and the school. Very few of the absentees felt isolated, but yet indicated confusion, not knowing to whom or where to turn for help.

Stennett, R. G. "Absence from School: Norms by Sex and Grade." The Journal of Educational Research 60 (April, 1976): 351-354.

Stennett used data from all students enrolled in the junior and senior high school in Itasca County (Minnesota) and the three most recent graduating classes. Attendance patterns were plotted with the following trends noted: Boys attended school more often than girls at every grade level except kindergarten. Absences decreased significantly from kindergarten to fourth grade, remained fairly consistent from fourth to sixth grade, decreased significantly at the beginning of junior high school, remained consistent until tenth grade and rose sharply through Grade 12. Stennett gave theories concerning the increases and decreases. The decrease in kindergarten to fourth grade was due to less contraction of infectious childhood diseases. The sharp decrease at the beginning of junior high school probably was due to an individual at the school who was responsible for following up on poor attendance. The increase at Grades 11 and 12 probably was due to the lack of compulsory laws which required students to attend school.

Washington, Roosevelt, Jr. "A Survey-Analysis of Problems Faced by Inter-City High School Students Who Have Been Classified as Truants." The High School Journal 56 (February, 1973): 248-257.

Washington used the Mooney Problem Checklist for data collection from 56 tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade habitually truant students. The problem most frequently marked by students was "wanting to earn some of my own money." "Getting low grades," "can't keep my mind on my studies," "missing too many days of school," and "afraid of failing in school," were also frequently checked. Eleven categories then were developed and an analysis of the responses given was charted using these categories. Washington found Adjustment to School Work ranked first as a problem area among these students. Curriculum and Teaching Procedures ranked eleventh; Finances, Living Conditions and Employment, third; Home and Family, fifth; and Social and Recreational Activities, ninth. Washington made several recommendations, including a recommendation for high school administrators and teachers to make an attempt to stay on top of the list of problems facing students in years to come.

Wheeler, Kirk and Mary Wheeler. "School Phobia." Instructor 9 (May, 1974): 16.

Wheeler and Wheeler discussed the term school phobia which was developed to describe the "absentee who is neither chronically ill nor truant" (16). Rather, when placed in a new setting of a school classroom, the child developed illnesses for which there was no physical cause. This response must quickly be eliminated, for "the behavior will persist only as long as the child continues to receive reinforcement for not going to school" (16). Rewards for staying home must be decreased. The "ill" student should not be sent home, but should stay in the nurse's office until they feel better. This usually occurred fairly quickly.

Wright, John S. "Factors in School Attendance." Phi Delta Kappan 58 (December, 1976): 358-359.

Wright investigated the relationship between attendance and population density, school size, percentage of state required courses, and pupil/teacher ratio. Securing information through questionnaires mailed to high school principals in Virginia and the superintendent of each school system in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Wright found a negative relationship existed between attendance and population density and attendance and school size. Wright found a positive relationship between attendance and the percentage of state required courses offered as phase electives (although he noted a negative relationship between attendance and the scope of elective offerings). Wright stated this negative relationship probably was due to the relationship between school size and attendance rates. Attendance rates also were higher in schools with proportionately more teachers.

EXPLANATIONS: SCHOOL, PEER, AND COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

Birman, Beatrice F. and Gary Natriello. "Perspectivies on Absenteeism in High Schools." Journal of Research and Development in Education 11 (Summer, 1978): 29-38.

The authors suggested three levels of absenteeism explanations: 1) student level, 2) school level, and 3) societal level. Explanations on the student level ranged from non-conformist behaviors to inadequate socialization in childhood. School level explanations pointed to peer group pressure. Absenteeism was likely to be higher in schools with a student body that did not value attendance. The school's context and structural arrangement also could offer explanations. The authors noted social scientists have argued the concept of alienation to explain high rates of absenteeism. The societal level dealt with the correspondence argument (schools were structured to encourage absenteeism with certain student groups as a function of social order), the citizenship argument (schools failed to recognize the needs of students who were fulfilling their requirements outside the educational system) and the articulation argument (students saw the institution of school as less likely to fulfill their needs in other institutions and were, therefore, less likely to put forth an effort at school work). The authors noted intervention was necessary and would require a restructuring of the educational system.

Copeland, Rodney E., Ronald E. Brown, Saul Axelrod, and R. Vance Hall. "Effects of a School Principal Praising Parents for Student Attendance." Educational Technology 12 (July, 1972): 56-59.

Students in a remedial summer school class were divided into an experimental group and a control group. During the baseline period, no calls were made to the students' parents. Attendance was nearly zero for both groups. The principal then called both group's parents urging them to send their child to class. Attendance increased in both groups to 100 percent. However, several days after the calls were made, attendance began to decline. At this time, the principal called the experimental group's parents to praise them for sending their child to class. Attendance increased again to 100 percent in the experimental group for several days, occasionally dropping to 60 percent and 40 percent. The control group's parents received no praise only a call once again urging attendance. The attendance rate increased, although only to approximately 50 percent and immediately dropped again. School attendance for the praise group leveled to 63.7 percent once the calls were discontinued. The data indicated some "student behaviors might more easily be controlled by reinforcing parents than by directly reinforcing the pupils" (58).

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Greene, James E., Sr. "Factors Associated with Absenteeism Among Students in Two Metropolitan High Schools." Journal of Experimental Education 31 (Summer, 1963): 389-394.

Greene presented a study of two metropolitan high schools, one economically advantaged and the other economically disadvantaged. Studying ten percent of the worst and best attenders of each school, Greene found attendance was related significantly to the economic status of the school. Through various studies, including Mooney's Problem Checklist and Bell's Adjustment-Inventory, Greene concluded the learner was confronted with many unfavorable conditions and pressures which could, and did, affect attendance. Therefore, Greene concluded, attendance must be viewed as a behavior, dependent upon the emotional maturity of the learner and the economical, educational, social, and home environmental conditions in which the learner was operating.

Little, Linda F. and Rock Thomas. "Truancy: How Parents and Teachers Contribute." The School Counselor 30 (March, 1983): 385-391.

A study was conducted to evaluate the effect parents and teachers had on children who were habitually truant. Questionnaires were sent to parents and teachers of 103 junior high school students. The surveys assessed rejection/overindulgence, ignoring/overprotectiveness, and extrinsic valuing/intrinsic valuing. The results indicated both parents and teachers contribute to a truant child's unwillingness or inability to attend school (288). Parents who rated high in the areas of overindulgence and overprotectiveness often had truant children.

How does this "jibe" w/ dear disadvantaged Study — Seemsat cross purposes?

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Monk, David H. and Mohd Ariffin Ibrahim. "Patterns of Absence and Pupil Achievement." American Education Research Journal 21 (Summer, 1984): 295-310.

Monk and Ibrahim studied absenteeism in relationship to achievement on three different levels: 1) the individual pupil level, 2) the classroom level, and 3) the interactions between pupil and classroom level. On the individual level, the authors found the more absences a student had, the more adversely achievement was affected. They also noted the timing of the absences did seem to make a difference, but the relationship was unclear. On the classroom level, because it was necessary for teachers to give remedial help to those students who were absent, students in a class with more absenteeism were affected academically more adversely than those students in classes with fewer absentees. The authors also noted students tended to perform better when the majority of absences were spread over a few days than when one or two students were absent every day. On the interaction level, the authors found individuals more likely to perform well when the class they missed was also missed by a larger percentage of the class.

? - reread for average - what level?

Moos, Rudolph H. and Bernice S. Moos. "Classroom Social Climate and Student Absences and Grades." Journal of Educational Psychology 70 (April, 1978): 263-269.

"Classroom environments are thought to have certain demand characteristics which influence student growth and development." This study was conducted to determine the effect of the classroom environment on the absenteeism rate and average class grade. Nineteen classes in the college preparatory program from one high school were studied. The subgroups of the Classroom Environment Scale were used to measure the relationships of absenteeism and grades. The authors found a positive correlation between absenteeism and classroom environments. Classrooms which rated high in "Competition and Teacher Control" and low in "Teacher Support," had high absenteeism rates.

Wright, John S. "Student Attendance: What Relates Where." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 62 (February, 1978): 115-117.

An analysis of statewide studies of schools in Virginia indicated the following: URBAN: Urban schools had the poorest attendance rate. However, if the school had a younger staff, attendance rates increased. Increases also were noted in schools which offered more music courses, work programs, and state required classes as phase electives. Lower teacher-pupil ratios also increased attendance. SUBURBAN: Increases in attendance at suburban schools were noted when work programs were offered, when more health and physical education courses were offered, and when an open campus policy was evident. Attendance decreased, however, as school size increased. OTHER: Few relationships were found between "other" schools and attendance. The author attributed this to the variety of programs offered, especially vocational and technical courses. These schools did have the highest attendance rates of the three category breakdowns

PROBLEMS: EFFECTS ON ACHIEVEMENT

Brokowski, William M. and Richard D. Dempsey. "Attendance Policies and Student Performance." The Clearing House 53 (November, 1979): 129-130.

A comparison of the performances of 666 secondary students was made in attendance, achievement, and behavior at New Milford (Connecticut) High School. No structured attendance policy was in effect the first year of the study, however, during the second year, a restrictive and punitive policy was initiated. The results showed overall improved performances, especially among older students with low IQ levels. Attendance for this group increased significantly while course failures decreased significantly. Students with high IQs did not seem to be influenced by the new policy as no significant differences were noted.

Caldwell, Janet H., William G. Huitt, and Anna O. Graeber. "Time Spent in Learning: Implications from Research." Elementary School Journal 82 (May, 1982): 4[illegible]

The article dealt with time and its effects on student achievement. Presenting many studies, the authors summarized, "time seems to be moderately related to student achievement, with the relationship becoming stronger as the measure of time reflects what students do in the classroom" (477). Relating the article to attendance the authors noted studies done by M. Kean, A. Summers, M. Rawetz, and I. Farber which found attendance correlated positively with reading achievement test score gains, and studies done by G. Bond and R. Dykstra which found negative correlations between absenteeism and student achievement.

Easton, John Q. and George Engelhard, Jr. "A Longitudinal Record of Elementary School Absence and its Relationship to Reading Achievement." Journal of Educational Research 75 (May/June, 1982): 269-274.

Easton and Engelhard studied the elementary attendance records of 317 Chicago high school students to evaluate student achievement in reading in relation to absenteeism. They found the absenteeism rate for the previous year was a significant predictor of teacher-assigned reading grades. Absences in Grade 3 were the most significant indicator of scores in Grades 3, 4, 5, and 7 (272). The tests also showed the relationship between reading achievement and absence was the strongest at the seventh and eighth grade levels.

Finch, F. H. and C. L. Nemzek. "Attendance and Achievement in High School." School and Society 41 (February 9, 1935): 207-208.

Finch and Nemzek obtained records of the graduating class of 1934 and the two succeeding classes at West High School (Minneapolis, Minnesota). The first group studied consisted of 101 boys and 114 girls, the second group, 214 boys and 208 girls. Data were separated according to sex. While the study could not prove the existence of sex differences in a relationship between attendance and school achievement, it did demonstrate attendance was related in varying degrees to the grades received by both male and female students.

Kersting, Joe "Absences and Averages." School and Community 53 (February, 1967): 17.

Kersting studied 100 students with the highest grade point averages and 100 students with the poorest grade point averages. He found a positive relationship existed. Those students with the highest grade point averages had the lowest absenteeism rates. Kersting recommended watching attendance patterns as they were indicators of potential student success (17).

Odell, C. W. "The Effect of Attendance Upon School Achievement." The Journal of Educational Research 8 (December, 1923): 422-432.

Odell attempted to determine the effect attendance and non-attendance had upon school work. Researching in the Chicago schools, Odell found: 1) Attendance had a "small, but definite positive relationship to their achievement age" (428), 2) attendance had "practically no effect upon their actual increases in achievement age except in the case of those pupils whose attendance records are very poor" (428), and 3) student attendance "is more closely related to the pupils average school marks" (428). Odell also noted the relationship between intelligence and attendance was very small, yet positive, as was the relationship between the attendance of a pupil from one semester to the next semester.

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Rozelle, Richard M. "The Relationship Between Absenteeism and Grades." Educational and Psychological Measurement 28 (Winter, 1968): 1151-1158.

Rozelle attempted to answer the question: "In secondary school, does poor attendance cause subsequent lower grades or do low grades cause subsequent poor attendance?" (1152) The data consisted of 12,330 grade and attendance records of students in the 1963 and 1964 graduating classes at Evanston (Illinois) Township High School. Rozelle's results were not conclusive in confirming or refuting the prediction, but the causation of prior absences to subsequent grades seemed more favorable (1156).

what does this mean — to student — study?

PROBLEMS: COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Morris, Gordon T. "The Truant " Today's Education 61 (January, 1972): 41-42.

Morris indicated in 1972 more truants were involved in crime than ever before. He noted a study conducted by the LAPD which demonstrated a significant drop (30 percent in daytime burglaries, 75 percent in auto theft) in crime when truants were apprehended and turned over to school officials.

"Truancy A Sign of Distress." Times Educational Supplement, 3163 January 16, 1976, 8.

A Home Office report examined the influences of family and environment on 14-16 year old girls who had court appearances at Greenwich between October, 1967, and March, 1969. Among other items, the study indicated only 32 percent of the court girls, who were still in school, thought they would remain. (This compared to 89 percent of the control group of school girls.) Approximately 75 percent of the court girls admitted to truancy compared to 25 percent of the control group girls. It also was noted most offenses of the court girls were committed when truant with friends.

SOLUTIONS: PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Davenport, Irvin W. "Combating Absenteeism." School and Community 63 (April, 1977): 7, 40.

Davenport suggested several methods of combating absenteeism within the school. Several methods were common, such as establishing and maintaining accurate record keeping systems, placing telephone calls to parents, developing a clear and comprehensive policy regarding absenteeism, truancy and suspension, and establishing a buddy system between students. Several of Davenport's ideas were unique. He proposed establishing a clothing bank for those students whose lack of appropriate wearing apparel created absences, sending a sick child home and keeping the child there until he or she was completely recovered, and involving segments of the community, such as ministers or law enforcement officers.

Doughtery, William. "Truancy Patrol Task Force -- A Cooperative Approach." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 67 (March, 1983): 119-120.

In Bronx (New York) a Truancy Task Force was formed which found police apprehending truants and taking them to the school where an interview occurred between the students and the attendance teacher. Referrals were then made to parents and records were updated in the truancy files. A large number of truants already had been processed through the program, but repeat offenders were a relatively small percentage of the daily total. Tardiness had been decreased signficantly and drug traffic near the school had been nearly eliminated. An improvement in attitudes also had been noted between students and law enforcement officers.

DuFour, Richard. "Crackdown on Attendance -- The Word is Out." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 67 (September, 1983): 133-135.

In 1974, Community High School (West Chicago, Illinois) had an attendance rate of 87 percent. Through renewed efforts, the school had increased the rate to 97 percent. The following procedures were instituted: 1) daily calls to all parents of all absentees (unless an excused absence occurred the previous day) followed by forms to be completed, 2) disciplinary action against students with unexplained or unexcused absences, 3) rewards and incentives for good attendance, 4) graphic charts showing student attendance, and 5) coordinated efforts of all individuals involved.

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Gallup, George H. "Ninth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools." Phi Delta Kappan 59 (September, 1977): 33-48.

The ninth annual Gallup poll was conducted in 1977. A national cross section of 1,506 adults (18 years and older) were questioned concerning their opinions of public schools. Absenteeism was one of the many items discussed. The question: "In your opinion what can be done by the schools to reduce student absenteeism (truancy)?" Three distinct categories developed: Those individuals who felt the increase in absenteeism was due to teachers and schools. Those who felt parents were to blame, and, finally, those who felt truancy was a matter for the police and local authorities. Suggestions ranged from taking the student into custody to fining the parents of children with unexcused absences.

Gross, Mel. "Community Involvement Helps Relieve Attendance Problems." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 61 (April, 1977): 115-116.

Willson High School (Cleveland) found problems of attendance were related to diverse student backgrounds and varied value systems. A "youth task force" was established to help allievate the problems in the classroom due to this diversification. Representatives of seven community agencies, the minister of a community church and the school were involved in attempts to "positively influence a young life, or set a student on the path to a better future" (116).

Hoback, John R. "The Problems of Attendance." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 60 (February, 1976): 20-29.

According to Hoback, the traditional method of assuring attendance had become obsolete. To obtain an effective attendance system, one must accept that students no longer viewed parents, teachers, and administrators as authority figures. A new program was developed which individualized student attendance. Parents were given three choices concerning attendance notification, ranging from non-contact by school officials to immediate contact when their child was absent. The school found communication was essential in reducing absences, but found the vital component was whether or not the student had a feeling of being needed and wanted. Although Hoback noted the school had not solved all attendance problems, he indicated less than 20 percent of the students had attendance problems and the drop out rate was around four percent with the new program.

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Jett, Daniel L. and Melva Lee Platt. "Pupil Attendance: The Bottom Line." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 63 (February, 1979): 32-38.

At North Harford Senior High School (Pylesville, Maryland) a simple method of managing school attendance had been developed. The basic premise of the policy stressed the importance of regular attendance. Through the use of color-coded cards, absences were recorded and processed. The addition of a full-time attendance clerk, who was involved with students, parents, and teachers, had increased the effectiveness of the program. A comparison of attendance figures between the 1975-1976 school year (when the old program was in effect) and the 1976-1977 school year (new program, attendance clerk) showed improvement. Although not statistically documented, Jett and Platt noted the attitude of parents, teachers, and students toward attendance had become more favorable.

LeCrone, Charles M., Carl Doolen, and John Wilkinson. "An Attendance Program that Works." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 62 (March, 1978): 115-116.

Lisle Senior High School (Lisle, Illinois) noted as many as 80 students per day were reported truant or cutting class. Through the efforts of a data processing company owner, a system using computer cards for each student was developed. Programs were written which gave daily attendance reports, as well as monthly and quarterly information. From the daily reports, calls were made to parents concerning unexcused absences. In its third year, the program seemed very successful. Unexcused absences dropped to 68 for 1973-1974, 33 for 1974-1975, and 21 for 1975-1976.

Maher, Charles A. "Behavioral Effects of Using Conduct Problem Adolescents as Cross-Age Tutors." Psychology in the Schools 19 (July, 1982): 360-364.

Maher examined the effect of cross age tutoring on the measures: 1) academic scholastic performance, 2) number of disciplinary referrals, and 3) the percentage of days in school attendance. Eighteen socially maladjusted and emotionally disturbed children from a large, urban New Jersey high school were divided into three groups 1) those who provided cross-age tutoring to elementary students, 2) those who were the recipients of cross-age tutoring, and 3) those who received group counseling by a second school psychologist. Regarding scholastic performance, in nearly all subject areas the cross-age tutors improved significantly. Regarding the attendance rates, cross-age tutors improved significantly, whereas the absenteeism rate for the students who received tutoring and group counseling increased. Discipline referrals also decreased among the cross-age tutors. The results, therefore, indicate a possible solution, in cross-age tutoring, to problem behaviors, including absenteeism.

Rieck, William A. "An Alternative Means for Improving Student Attendance." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 68 (January, 1984): 92-95.

Hicksville High School (New York) developed an alternative program for students with attendance problems without increasing costs. After discussions with their parents, habitual absentees were placed together in home room and the first three classes (English, social studies, and mathematics). Referred to as the A-Program, the academic curricula remained the same for all students, but the teaching techniques required more group participation. As soon as a student was noted absent, calls were made to the parents. The students received mini-report cards each week assessing progress in all aspects. During the first year, 1980-1981, the A-Program's absenteeism rate was 11 percent, close to the school average of 9.5 percent. Tardiness was reduced and class cutting was eliminated almost completely.

Suprina, Richard N. "Cutting Down on Student Cutting." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 63 (February, 1979): 27-31.

Conversations with the faculty and students (and their parents) of Hauppauge (New York) High School indicated "stimulating classes were the best deterrent to student class absenteeism" (27). Most students noted they cut class if a substitute was teaching. To prevent this, the school developed the "Enriched Education Experiences" Program. When the regular teacher was absent for short periods of time, the students attended lectures, demonstrations, films, etc. Compulsory attendance was expected during the program and absences were treated the same as absences from regular classes.

The same survey indicated pupils wanted to know their family cared. Therefore, an attendance policy was developed which involved the parents. After the first illegal absence, a report was mailed home. A second absence indicated a parent conference. The student was aware that continual absences could result in permanent withdrawal from class with its consequences. The administration noted the program had met with success.

SOLUTIONS: STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Christen, William L. and Steven M. Brown. "High School Study Skills: Can They Affect Attendance?" National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 66 (October, 1982): 123-124.

The authors stressed the study was not a wide scale, statistically sound study. However, 20 students during the 1980-1981 school year at Coronado High School (Scottsdale, Arizona) were involved in a project designed to improve study skills and keep them going to class. Of the 20 students, 13 completed the ten hours of study, which included training in time management, note taking, listening, proper review techniques, reading comprehension and vocabulary development, rate-boost readings, following oral and written instructions, preparation and the actual taking of tests. Although the Coronado Study Skills project did not eliminate absenteeism completely, the frequency was reduced. The authors felt this was a result of students learning the self-direction and self-motivation to complete independent activities.

Konet, Richard J. "An Attendance System that Works: The Student Attendance Review Committee." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 67 (March, 1983): 103-106.

At Westfield High School (New Jersey) a Student Attendance Review Committee (SARC) was formed to attempt to improve the attendance of those students who were inclined to miss class, and to separate those students who wished to improve their attendance from those who did not. When a student was absent for an unauthorized reason, he or she was "SARCed." This student was expected to report to SARC for counseling on the importance of daily attendance. A second time offender must serve detention. Double detention was required for the third offense and a call was placed to the parents. Fourth-time offenders generally were suspended. Saturday suspension was used when necessary and a court appearance could be required if all other methods failed. Attendance at Westfield is over 90 percent on the average day. Konet noted the reason for the success of this program was the involvement of the staff, administrators and parents.

Minkler, Roy. "Humanizing Attendance Procedures." The Clearing House 53 (February, 1980): 266-267.

In an attempt to reduce absenteeism, a probationary program of 45 hard core truants was initiated. In order to return to the regular program, these students had to accept responsibility for regular attendance to special placement classes. Each student signed an education plan agreement and reported to the attendance supervisor each morning. Each student was issued cards which were to be initialled daily by the teacher (with progress noted), then signed by the parents. After a successful month, students were allowed to rejoin the regular program. During the first year of the program, attendance percentages rose from 80 to 97 percent.

Reynolds, Carol. "Buddy System Improves Attendance." Elementary School Guidance and Counseling 11 (April, 1977): 305-306.

A buddy system was developed at the middle-junior high level in the Denver public schools. Thirty students with absenteeism problems selected a buddy. The teams were encouraged to call each other each night or to meet at the bus. Together they reported daily to the aide in charge of attendance. Awards were given every six weeks to the teams with an increase in attendance. Attendance in the program showed significant improvement. Period truancy decreased as well.

Sentelle, Sam P. "A Helping Hand for the Chronic Truant." Educational Leadership 37 (March, 1980): 471-472.

An alternative program, set apart from the regular school, had been developed in Elizabethton (Tennessee) schools to help eliminate chronic truancy. Sentelle viewed truancy as a symptom not a problem and stated our schools often reinforced truancy through their set up. The alternative program offered the student an opportunity to develop a better relationship with a teacher and to make up work with a plan devised to fit the individual's needs. The student remained in the program until a regular pattern of attendance was established, usually ten days to two weeks. Upon returning to the regular classroom, the student often was ahead of the class, which again reinforced his/her learning and attendance.

Unger, Karen V., Alex Douds, and Richard M. Pierce. "A Truancy Prevention Project." Phi Delta Kappan 60 (December, 1978): 317.

According to the authors, students with a history of truancy often lacked career goals, basic study habits, and could not initiate positive interaction with teachers. Through simulation exercises, students could acquire these skills. At Sunnyside Junior High School (Tucson, Arizona) students were involved in a skills training program during which time absenteeism was monitored closely. Before the program, the absenteeism rate was over 34 percent. During the program, the rate declined to 14 percent and leveled to 17 percent during the follow-up period. Using pre- and post-tests, school officials found not only an increase in attendance, but a decrease in problem behaviors, class skipping, and office referrals, and an improvement in grade point averages, assignment and classroom preparation, and an improved attitude toward the school and teachers.

SOLUTIONS: BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

Brooks, B. David. "Contingency Management as a Means of Reducing School Truancy." Education 95 (Spring, 1975): 206-211.

For this study, truancy was considered an alterable behavior. Two behavior modifications were employed (a modified token economy which included rewards/bonuses and a collective contingency contract). Sixty high school students participated. Three groups (control, experimental, and a group of students who were not involved) followed the school's traditional policy of attendance during an eight-week period. The following eight weeks, the experimental group was involved in behavior modification. During the second eight-week period, the rate of truancy decreased significantly.

Dawson, Greg. "Students as Wage-Earners: Farewell, Learning for Learning's Sake." Phi Delta Kappan 62 (December, 1980): 291.

In a satirical view, Dawson discussed the attendance program of Memorial Junior High School (San Diego) where students were paid $.25 per day to attend school. The money was scrip redeemable for school-related items. The principal, Bob Amparan, noted the subtle difference stating he was not paying students to come, but rewarding them for attending. Since the school was losing $9.00 per day in state funds for each unauthorized absence, the reward of higher attendance helped offset this loss. Dawson, however, foresaw problems with this policy. Students ultimately would demand higher wages, fringe benefits, and even form unions, thereby, making a living attending class.

Morgan, Ronald R. "An Exploratory Study of Three Procedures to Encourage School Attendance." Psychology in the Schools 12 (April, 1975): 209-215.

Morgan examined the effects of utilizing material, peer and teacher reinforcements upon absenteeism. Ninety-two lower socioeconomic Mexican Americans from two Tempe elementary schools (K-5), who had missed more than five days in the first two months of school were divided into four groups: Material plus peer social reinforcement (M+PSR), material reinforcement only (MR), teacher social reinforcement only (TR), and a control group. The M+PSR group further was divided into triads consisting of two regular attendees and one target child (the frequent absentee). The group would receive tokens (which were later exchanged for toys) when the target child attended school. Variable ratios were used to help resist extinction. The MR group worked individually. Each child received a token when he or she attended. The TR group, also working individually, received only teacher social reinforcement in the presence of the class. The results showed significant reduction in absenteeism for all three groups over the control group. Extinction occurred more rapidly in the TR group, however. Morgan found all four groups reduced absenteeism and attributed this to the experiment. He did not find any significant difference which would indicate using one method over another.

Richburg, Robert W. and Douglas D. Sjogren. "The Four-Day Week -- What Are the Advantages for Schools?" National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 67 (January, 1983): 60-63.

In April, 1980, Colorado's state legislature allowed school districts to experiment with four-day week schedules. Several cost savings were noted. Of interest was the decrease in absenteeism rates. A range of 9 percent to 39 percent fewer absences was noted. Several reasons were given, including a weekday free for dental and doctor appointments. Extra-curricular activities could also be scheduled on "free" days.

"Tardy Pupils Get Alarming Calls." The South Bend Tribune, 112 February 1, 198[illegible], 1.

A high school principal in Chicago had reduced tardiness by 50 percent since he began making wake up calls to approximately 400 chronically truant students. Each day between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m., Dr. Pilditch, principal of Morgan Park High School, placed a call to the child's parent indicating their child had been habitually late. This call continued until the problem was solved.

Thomas, Dan, Bill Werkel, and Duane Faris. "The Concern for a Kid Program." The School Counselor 29 (May, 1982): 418.

At Mason County High School in Northeast Kentucky, the Concern for a Kid Program was implemented. One hundred ninety students were identified as casual truants. The school's 45 teachers each were asked to choose five students with whom they had a positive or neutral relationship. Teachers were encouraged to develop "the best possible relationship" (418) with these students through a general showing of interest. During the program, all teachers noticed a positive change and attendance increased from 91.2 percent to 93.5 percent.

SOLUTIONS: SETTING A LIMIT - DENIAL OF CREDIT

Bryne, Robert. "Capturing the Elusive Student: Putting Accountability Theory into Attendance Practice." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 65 (May, 1981): 29-33.

Bryne stated the most elusive problem confronting educators was the ever-growing number of students who had little motivation to attend school. Recognizing this problem, in 1977 the Cinnaminron (New Jersey) School District implemented a new attendance program. The program allowed students 12 absences per full-year course (six for a semester course, three for a quarter course). Once these limits were exceeded, the students were placed in non-credit status. The average daily attendance did increase significantly, but paperwork, appeals, complaints from parents, and a distrustful attitude between students and administrators also increased. The following year the policy was revised, giving non-credit only in cases where the absence was illegitimate or the parents were unaware of the absence. The program succeeded. Class cutting and absenteeism were decreased significantly while attitudes significantly improved.

at what level?

Carruthers, Robert L. and John Dewer. "An Attendance Policy that Works." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 64 (December, 1980): 117-118.

C. E. Ellison High School in Kileen, Texas, withheld credit toward graduation to students with excessive absenteeism in a course. Parents were notified when a student had accumulated four and six absences. A seventh absence caused credit loss. The administration at Ellison felt the policy would become more effective as students realized the ramifications.

Fernandez, Edward and Manuel Cardenas. "Absenteeism: Is There a Solution?" National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 60 (November, 1976): 87-91.

Alarmed by the increasing absenteeism rate, Las Cruces and Mayfield High Schools adopted a new attendance procedure in 1974 (similar to one in practice at a Ferndale, Michigan, High School). Basically, the plan allowed ten sick days in one class. Upon exceeding ten days, grades and credits for the class were forfeited. Three tardies were treated as one absence. Rewards were given to students who were absent fewer than four times during a semester. An appeal procedure was developed to deal with problem areas. Comparison of the attendance data indicated a significant decrease in attendance for the 1972-1973 and 1973-1974 school years as opposed to a significant increase during the 1974-1975 year. Tardies also were decreased 85 percent. An interesting note was in the attendance rate when a small flu epidemic hit the community, the rate was still two percentage points higher than it was for the same period during the years before the plan.

Garcia, Elio J. "Instant Quarter-Credit Concept -- An Answer to Class Cutting?" National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 63 (February, 1979): 39-43.

To reduce absenteeism, Garcia stated one must examine society's preoccupation with instant gratification. The concept of "Instant Quarter-Credit" was developed to satisfy this need. This plan gave credit to a student for each quarter of the course completed. If the student did not receive a full credit, he or she must repeat the course. The incentive remained in the student's desire to attend a class in which he or she had already obtained one-, two- or three-fourths credit. The Norwalk Board of Education modified this plan with the "Denial of Credit" concept. The program allowed students three unexcused absences or five tardies before issuing an "F-A -- failure due to attendance" grade. The student must then make up the course work. During the first quarter of the 1977-1978 school year, daily absenteeism decreased 19 percent, tardiness was reduced 31 percent, and a 50 percent reduction of classes missed was noted. A 25 percent decrease in failing marks and an 18 percent decrease in the number of students failing also was noted.

Malbon, Lee C. and Ronald L. Nuttall. "A Promising Approach to Absenteeism in the Secondary School." Phi Delta Kappan 64 (September, 1982): 66-67.

The authors noted absenteeism averages of four to five percent annually were a result of illness, two percent annually resulted from weather or transportation problems. The remainder of the ten to fifteen percent annual rate was a result of personal choice. In an attempt to increase attendance, the Malden (Massachusetts) School Committee endorsed a new plan for the 1977-1978 school year which allowed six unexcused absences per quarter. A grade of E was given at the seventh absence which, at the teacher's discretion, was worth between 0 to 59 points out of a possible 100, and then averaged with the full-year course grade. The end of the first year showed an attendance rate increase from 87.4 percent to 91.1 percent. The low-achieving students showed the largest increase, gaining 9.2 days additional attendance.

McNitt, Gary D. "Excused and Unexcused Absences -- Setting the Limit." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 67 (December, 1983): 125.

The Adrian (Michigan) High School suffered from 11 to 15 percent absenteeism daily. The previous policy limited unexcused, but not excused, absences. Since this policy did not appear successful, a new policy, allowing only six absences in any one class, was implemented. Appeals dealt with unusual cases. Those students who exceeded six absences retained credit status by making up equivalent hours after school or on Saturdays. The program had been very successful. Although the first semester's absenteeism rate was just over 7.5 percent, the fall semester of 1982-1983 was an impressive 3.5 percent.

SOLUTIONS: A WORD OF CAUTION

Zirkel, Perry A. and Ivan B. Gluckman. "A Legal Brief: Academic Penalties for Absences." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 66 (January, 1982): 101-104.

In order to decrease absenteeism, Harrison (Michigan) Community Schools denied credit to students who were absent more than seven days. One student, with anemia and a doctor's excuse, was denied credit and filed a class action suit. Sprague v. Harrison Community Schools (September 10, 1980) invalidated the attendance policy, reinstated credit to those who would have passed the class and tutorial services to those who elected to stay out of class. The court ruled the school board policy was in violation of Michigan's truant statute and, by not recognizing unexcused-excused absences, violated the state's compulsory education laws. The court noted the number of days, seven, did not affect the decision citing Gutierrez v. School District R-1 (1978) and Wheatling v. Burlington Board of Education (September 25, 1974). The article also noted cases where violations were found when credit was given but grades were lowered due to absences.

SUMMARY

Malbon and Nuttall noted absenteeism averages of four to five percent annually were a result of illness, two percent annually resulted from weather or transportation problems, the remainder of the ten to fifteen percent annual rate was a result of personal choice. (Malbon and Nuttall, 1982) Some authors found the annual rate due to personal choice was much higher. Rogers stated some urban schools reached levels of 30 percent on the average day. (Rogers, 1980) This rate of absenteeism created a concern among many educators and administrators as well as community members and parents. Some school systems set out to define the absentee student in an attempt to determine needs which were not being met under the present programs.

Definitions of the absentee student were varied, but a common theme did seem to prevail. Levanto noted distinguishable patterns, stating boys generally had lower rates during the first three years of high school than girls, absenteeism increased with each succeeding class and age group, and lower rates were found when students lived with both parents. (Levanto, 1975) Platt found a relationship between the number of friends a student thought he or she had and school attendance. (Platt, 1943) A similar finding was noted by Brimm, Forgety, and Sadler when they stated older and less popular students were more likely to be absent. (Brimm, Forgety, and Sadler, 1978)

The factors influencing the increase in absenteeism rates were numerous. Peer pressure was a major influence. Birman and Natriello found absenteeism rates were higher in schools with a student body who did not value attendance. (Birman and Natriello, 1978) The classroom and school environment were also major influences. The "correspondence argument" presented by Birman and Natriello went so far as to state some schools were structured to encourage

absenteeism with certain student groups as a function of social order. (Birman and Natriello, 1978) Wright (1978) also found the type of school was a major influence. He noted the differences between urban, suburban, and "other" schools and found "other" schools (which offered a variety of courses and alternatives) generally had the highest attendance rates. (Wright, 1978) Economics even influenced absenteeism rates. Greene found attendance was related significantly to the economic status of the school and noted attendance should be viewed as a behavior dependent upon the economical, educational, social and home environmental conditions in which the learner was operating. (Greene, 1963) Parents had a concrete influence upon attendance rates. Suprina, in his study, found students wanted to know their family cared. When an attendance policy was developed which involved their parents, it met with success. (Suprina, 1979)

The studies relating to achievement and absenteeism were often contradictory. Levanto described habitually absent students as generally poor achievers. (Levanto, 1975) Rozelle stated achievement was not necessarily the result of excessive absenteeism. Rozelle found his results were not conclusive in determining if prior absences were the cause of subsequent grades. (Rozelle, 1968) The research by Easton and Engelhard found the absenteeism rate for the previous year was a significant predictor of teacher-assigned reading grades. (Easton and Engelhard, 1982) The studies by Brokowski and Dempsey found a structured attendance policy increased attendance and decreased course failures. (Brokowski and Dempsey, 1979) Morgan noted, during his exploratory study of methods to encourage school attendance, all four groups (including the control group) reduced absenteeism. Sometimes referred to as the Hawthorne Effect in psychology,

Morgan found when individuals knew changes and monitoring were taking place, their respective performances improved. (Morgan, 1975) In any case, studies have shown a positive relationship between attendance and achievement (without regard to the cause and effect relationship) and as Kersting recommended, watching attendance patterns could be justified as they could be potential indicators of success. (Kersting, 1967)

Increased absenteeism also had an effect upon the community. Morris noted a study conducted by the LAPD which found a significant drop in crime when truants were apprehended and turned over to school officials. (Morris, 1972) An article which appeared in the Times Educational Supplement found girls who had court appearances were less likely to remain in school then those girls who had never been to court. It was also noted most of the offenses committed by the court girls were committed when truant with friends. ("Truancy A Sign of Distress," 1976)

Educators, administrators, parents and even students realized solutions to increasing absenteeism were necessary. Many schools had created reduction programs with the involvement of parents and the community. A Truancy Task Force was formed in Bronx, New York, which found police cooperating with the school in apprehending truants. (Doughtery, 1983) In a Cleveland High School, seven community agencies and the minister of the community church were involved in attempts to ". . . positively influence a young life. . . ." (Gross, 1977) Several reduction programs placed calls to parents to inform them of their child's absence. LeCrone, Doolen and Wilkinson noted unexcused absences dropped significantly when calls were made to parents concerning absenteeism. (LeCrone, Doolen and Wilkinson, 1978) Hicksville High School developed a program whereby parents of habitually absent students

received mini-report cards weekly assessing student progress. As soon as a student was absent in this program, a call was placed to the parent. Attendance increased significantly. (Rieck, 1984) Hoback discussed a program which allowed parents a choice concerning attendance notification. He found less than 20 percent of the students had attendance problems after the program was implemented. (Hoback, 1976)

Other reduction programs found students accountable for their absences. Unger, Douds, and Pierce found students with attendance problems often lacked career goals, basic study skills and could not initiate positive interaction with teachers. (Unger, Douds, and Pierce, 1978) With this in mind, several schools developed skills training programs in an attempt to increase attendance. Sunnyside Junior High School (Tucson, Arizona) initiated such a program and found not only an increase in attendance, but a decrease in problem behaviors and an improvement in attitudes toward the school and teachers. (Unger, Douds, and Pierce, 1978) Coronado High School (Scottsdale, Arizona) also designed a project to improve study skills and keep the students going to class and noted a reduction in absenteeism. (Christen and Brown, 1982) Westfield High School (New Jersey) developed a Student Attendance Review Committee (Konet, 1983) and a middle-junior high school in Denver developed a buddy system (Reynolds, 1977) Each school used students monitoring other students as a method of absenteeism reduction. Both schools noted significant improvement.

Behavior modification had played a significant role in reducing student absenteeism. A modified token economy (a form of positive reinforcement) was used with an experimental group of high school students in an attempt to alter behavior. The rate of truancy of the experimental group significantly

decreased when compared to the control group. (Brooks, 1975) A form of behavior modification was implemented when a high school principal in Chicago began calling parents of chronically truant students each day between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. The calls continued until the problem was solved. ("Tardy Pupils Get Alarming Calls," 1985) Each teacher at Mason County High School was asked to develop ". . . the best possible relationship . . ." with five students of the 190 who were identified as casual truants. All teachers noticed a positive change and an attendance increase. (Thomas, Werkel, and Faris, 1982)

Several programs had set limits on the amount of absences the school would allow before disciplinary action or denial of credit took place. The Cinnaminron (New Jersey) School District (Bryne, 1981) and the Las Cruces and Mayfield High Schools (Fernandez and Cardenas, 1976) were two examples of this concept. Both schools noted significant increases in attendance. Garcia believed the examination of society's pre-occupation with instant gratification explained the increase in absenteeism in schools. Garcia thought a concept of "Instant Quarter Credit" would satisfy this need and increase attendance. Under this concept a student would receive quarter credit for each quarter of a year's course he or she completed. Garcia believed the student would have incentive to complete a course in which he or she had received partial credit. The Norwalk Board of Education modified this concept and found a significant decrease in absenteeism. (Garcia, 1979) A word of caution was stated by Zirkel and Gluckman to schools who had instituted this type of program. They noted a court case, Sprague v. Harrison Community Schools, in which the school was required to reinstate credit because the policy was in violation of Michigan's truant statutes. (Zirkel and Gluckman, 1982)

The information presented in this summary has attempted to draw together this paper. The conclusions and recommendations which follow will attempt to finalize this effort.

CONCLUSIONS

From a review of the information, it was concluded that the description of the habitually absent or truant student differed depending upon the study (although some generalizations were drawn). On the average, the studies indicated the older and less popular student was more likely to be absent. A study by Platt found a positive relationship between the number of friends a student thought he or she had and attendance. Those students who were not involved in extracurricular activities were absent more often than their counterparts. Black students were cited as having higher absenteeism rates (although one study found no relationship between absenteeism and race). The studies also noted which students were more likely to be in attendance. These students usually lived with both parents and were involved in college-preparatory programs. One study noted members of the Jewish faith had the highest attendance rate, followed by Catholics.

It was concluded there were many influences on the decision of absenteeism versus attendance. Peer pressure, the classroom and school environment, parental involvement (or lack of involvement) and the economic status of the community were prime influences on this decision.

The question of whether absenteeism affected achievement remained unresolved. One study suggested achievement rates may effect absenteeism rates. However, the majority of the studies indicated students who were habitually

absent had lower achievement rates, IQ scores and grades. As one study concluded, ". . . the results were not conclusive in confirming or refuting the prediction, but the causation of prior absences to subsequent grades seemed more favorable." (Rozelle, 1968)

Community problems were difficult to assess. Although several articles stated community involvement in reduction programs was necessary, the review of the literature found few articles which referred to an increase in crime due to absenteeism. It was concluded, however, in these articles that crime did increase in the community as absenteeism increased in the school.

Overall, the solutions offered as reduction programs were successful. It was concluded that the involvement of all individuals directly affected by the program was necessary to reduce absenteeism successfully. The programs were varied with suggestions of rewards or positive reinforcement, punishment or negative reinforcement, student monitoring by other students, teachers, parents or a combination of all three. It was concluded the environment of the school, classroom, community, and the influence of peers, parents, educators and administrators determined the success of any program.

In general, the review of the information concluded absenteeism was a major concern and solutions must be developed in order to reduce the increase. Recommendations were now necessary to complete this investigation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Before instituting a program to reduce absenteeism, a school assess the needs of the student and the needs of the educators and administrators. Programs which have been successful in one school environment may not be successful in another school environment.

2. A cross section of the school's personnel and students and the community be involved in the development of a program to reduce absenteeism. Studies have shown a greater percentage of acceptance occurs when the individuals affected are a part of the decision making process.

3. Students direct and develop programs in schools where peer pressure is a major influence.

4. Policies be developed for only those students who are habitually absent if the greater majority of the students are attending under a more traditional policy.

5. Programs and policies be reviewed frequently to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness. Even the best procedures and programs need to be evaluated periodically for obsolescence.

One final generation did academic work improvement of attendance & a change in pacher attitudes

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